PETITION,

&c.

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FROM

THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

CITY AND DISTRICT OF QUEBEC.

TO THE

KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The Petition of the undersigned Seigniors, Magistrates, Members of the Clergy, Officers of Militia, Merchants, Landholders and others, Inhabitants of the City and District of Quebec, Province of Lower Canada.

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

THAT your Petitioners have learnt with the greatest satisfaction, that your Majesty has taken into your gracious consideration the state of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, with a view to adjust certain differences relating to matters of revenue complained of by the Province of Upper Canada; and as it appears that your Majesty's Government in the course of its inquiry into the sources of these differences, has become satisfied of the necessity of some change being made in the constitutions of these Provinces, but has postponed the adoption of final measures in order to give time to the people

thereof to express their sentiments, your Petitioners beg leave humbly to approach your Majesty with a statement of various evils under which they have laboured for some years, and from which they have no hope of relief except by the interposition of Your Majesty and the Imperial Parliament.

The experience of thirty years has now demonstrated the impolicy of the Act of the British Parliament, 31 Geo. III. Cap. 31, by which the late Province of Quebec was divided into the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. To this division your Petitioners ascribe the present ineffective state of their Legislature, and the want of those necessary measures for diffusing throughout the whole population of the country, feelings becoming their character as British subjects, and introducing that general spirit of improvement, which encouraged by the commercial system, universally pervades and invigorates other British Colonies. This division has created a difference of interest between the Provinces in matters connected with revenue highly injurious to both, inevitably producing a spirit of dissension and animosity, and infusing into the Legislatures principles of a narrow and selfish policy, adverse to the general developement of their resources, and in an especial manner to the improvement of the channels of intercourse between them; and it is essential here to notice, that nearly the whole of the revenue of the two Provinces arises from duties levied on merchandize imported at the Port of Quebec, under laws enacted by the

Legislature of the Lower Province. It has also, from the controul which the geographical situation of the Lower Province enables it to exercise over the trade of the Canadas, placed the export trade of the Upper Province at its mercy, being subject to such regulations and restrictions at the shipping port, as its Legislature may choose to impose: From this circumstance, and from the feeble attempts made to improve the grand natural channel of the Canadas, strikingly contrasted with the enterprize and energy evinced by the neighbouring State of New York in the rapid formation of canals, together with the indifferenee manifested on this subject by the Legislature of the Lower Province; your Petitioners have just reason for alarm, that if a similar system be persisted in, it may tend in a most injurious degree to increase the commercial intercourse of the Upper Province with the United States, and divert the enterprize and trade of its inhabitants into a foreign channel, and from these causes your Petitioners not only apprehend the immediate loss of beneficial trade, but that the gradual effect would be to interweave the interests of the Upper Canadians with those of the neighbouring States, thereby alienating their minds from the people of this Province, and weakening their affection for your Majesty's Government, notwithstanding their present known and tried loyalty.

The Legislature of this Province has for a long time past been agitated by dissensions, and their deliberations so much interrupted thereby, that trade, agri-

culture, education, and other objects of general interest have been neglected. There exists no law for the registry of lands and mortgages, so necessary for security in commercial transactions, no insolvent debtors act; and your Petitioners have looked in vain for a law to provide for the unrepresented state of the townships, a fertile and valuable portion of this Province, settled by inhabitants of British origin; of these legislative enactments and many other necessary to quicken the enterprize and industry of a commercial country your Petitioners entertain little hope, until a reunion of the provinces, shall have weakened the influence which has hitherto prevented their adoption in our statute book. The existence of this influence, your Petitioners chiefly attribute to the impolitic division of these provinces, which instead of rendering it the interest, as it is the duty of every individual of the community to concur in measures to assimilate the whole population, and to allay the jealousies naturally existing between the several classes, has unavoidably presented to the individuals, who first attained a majority in the Legislature, a temptation to perpetuate their own power by adopting a course directly opposite. To the same influence, may be traced the small encouragement which has been held out to the settlement of the vacant lands of this Lower Province by British population, and consequently, that upwards of eighty thousand souls (a number equal to one fourth of the actual French population) who since the last American war have emigrated to this province from Great Britain

and Ireland, scarcely one twentieth part remain within its limits.

Your Petitioners have observed with gratitude, the disposition which your Majesty's Government has evinced by the Act of the present year of your Majesty, Cap. 119, to apply a remedy to the existing political evils of these Provinces, but it is their humble opinion that the provisions thereof are insufficient; that numerous circumstances concur to render vain any attempt permanently to regulate to the satisfaction of both Provinces the division of the revenue collected at the Port of Quebec, unless united under one Legislature: and further they humbly beg leave to express their fears, that some of the provisions of this Act, although dictated by the necessity of regulating the conflicting claims of the two Provinces, may afford a pretext to others for imputing to the Imperial Parliament a disposition remote from the intentions and views of your Majesty's Government.

Having thus stated the evils under which they have suffered, your Petitioners feeling the fullest confidence in the justice and wisdom of your Majesty's Government, and being satisfied that the subject will receive the most serious and deliberate consideration, would have felt much hesitation in presuming to suggest remedies; but, as the reunion of the two Provinces has been proposed in the Imperial Parliament, they beg leave to express their entire acquiescence in the adoption of that measure, upon such principles as shall secure to all classes of your Majesty's Subjects

in these Provinces, their just rights, and protect the whole in the enjoyment of existing laws and their religion as guaranteed—such a union would in the opinion of your Petitioners afford the most effectual remedy for existing evils, as it would tend gradually to assimilate the whole population in opinions, habits and feelings, and afford a reasonable hope that the wisdom of the United Legislature would devise a system of Government of more consistency and unity, and of greater liberality to all classes than has hitherto been experienced.

A union on the equitable principles humbly suggested by your Majesty's Petitioners, will necessarily include a representation proportionate as near as possible to the numbers, wealth, and resources of the different classes of Inhabitants of these Provinces, will require no innovation in the laws or religion of the country, nor proscription in debate or motion in the Legislature, of the language of any portion of the Inhabitants, in every class of whom, bravery and loyalty have been evinced as fellow soldiers in defence of the Provinces.

May it therefore graciously please your Majesty that a Bill for the Union of the two Provinces of Upper and Lower-Canada, on the equitable terms prayed for by your Petitioners, do pass into law, and the constitution established thereby be preserved inviolate to your Petitioners and their posterity.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

QUEBEC, December, 1822.